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Neighbourhood planning pilots announced

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The first communities to test new rights to give local people a greater say in the way their area looks have been announced.

New neighbourhood plans will be trailed by 17 communities from a mix of rural and urban areas. The plans, which were introduced by the government through the Localism Bill, will allow communities to plan their development.

Local people will be able to decide the types of development given automatic planning permission through a neighbourhood development order. If approved by a local referendum, a council will need to adopt a neighbourhood plan providing it is line with wider ambitions for growth in their area.

Decentralisation minister Greg Clark, making the announcement on Friday, said: 'Planning has increasingly become one of the most contentious issues in Britain, with communities becoming pitted against development. Often the reason is that local people feel alienated from the planning process, with no influence over changes to their area.

'Neighbourhood planning will help to reverse that position by giving communities the ability to shape development in their area rather than being dictated to.'

Each of the pilot areas will receive £20,000 towards developing their plan from a £1 million fund. A further 33 grants of £20,000 will also be awarded from the fund to projects that applied to be front runners to help them achieve plans on their own.

A government impact assessment published alongside the Localism Bill estimated the average cost of the plans at between £17,000 and £63,000. It adds councils in some areas could end up paying £200,000 to develop their plans.

The 17 front runners are:

- Birmingham City Council - Balsall Heath (Birmingham)

- BristolCity Council - Lockleaze (Bristol)
- London Borough of Southwark - Bermondsey
- London Borough of Sutton - Hackbridge
- North Tyneside Council - North Shields Fish Quay
- Wirral Borough Council - Devonshire Park
- Allerdale Borough Council - Cockermouth
- Blaby District Council - Blaby
- Cherwell Borough Council - Banbury
- Exmoor National Park Authority - Lynton
- Gedling Borough Council - Newstead
- Lewes District Council - Ringmer
- Northumberland County - Allendale
- Shropshire Council - Much Wenlock
- Teignbridge District Council - Dawlish
- West Dorset District Council - Cerne Abbas
- Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead - Bray